



The 125th Anniversary Congress on 18-22 September 2017 in Freiburg, Germany, will offer a wide selection of scientific sessions highlighting innovative research and interdisciplinary research approaches of relevance to forests, and focus on the transfer of scientific knowledge on critical global forest-related challenges to national and international political agendas. In a series of "Congress Spotlight" articles individual sessions shall be showcased to give a foretaste of the richness and scope of research findings that will be presented at the Congress. Keep updated at: <http://iufro2017.com/>

IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress Spotlight / Division 4 - #48 / July 2017

Forest tourism can mean billions in economic benefits

Dr. Taylor Stein of the University of Florida in Gainesville believes "that any meeting that addresses the management of the world's forests is incomplete without a focused discussion on tourism."

While there is limited research on the impact of nature-based tourism, Dr. Stein pointed to a 2007 report from the Center for Responsible Travel that said nature-based tourism accounted for 7% of the international tourism market and had a \$77 billion impact on the world's economy.

And, he added, surveys of travelers around the world consistently show that natural attractions (e.g. wildlife) are important reasons for their visits and they value conservation and protection of environmental quality.



Tourism and recreation should receive just as much thought, science, and funding as other forest uses. (Photo Pixabay)

For those reasons, natural resource managers require systematic research and up-to-date science to better understand how to best integrate tourism and recreation management into forest management practices, he said.

(The United Nations would seem to be thinking along the same lines as Dr. Stein. The UN has declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.)

Dr. Stein is coordinator of a session on forest tourism to be held at the IUFRO 125th anniversary congress in Freiburg, Germany in September entitled: **Nature-based tourism and recreation's role in sustaining forests and improving people's quality of life**. He expects it to show that good science is needed to plan and manage for tourism in natural areas.

The socio-ecological system is extremely complex and sustainably planned tourism requires a good understanding of that system, he said.

“Forest managers and policy makers must recognize that quality nature-based tourism planning and management can result in a multitude of benefits. If managers are not even aware of the benefits of recreation and tourism and only see recreation and tourism as a cost – as many managers currently do – then we should not be surprised that managing for tourism and recreation is consistently considered a “new” idea and/or a distraction from “more important” forest management goals such as timber or restoration,” Dr. Stein said.

He sees platforms such as the IUFRO Congress acting as a catalyst to bring about a change in thinking. “Meetings like the upcoming IUFRO one can help make this change occur.

“As more forest professionals see tourism and recreation presented at scientific meetings, they will learn that this use of the forest should not be considered a low priority of forest management, but tourism and recreation should receive just as much thought, science, and funding as other forest uses,” he said.

“Most natural resource professionals entered their fields to focus on ecology and were not sufficiently trained in the social sciences,” he said. “I think social science classes should be better integrated into natural resource managers’ educations. Specifically, classes on conflict management, collaboration, communications, and recreation management should be required of all natural resource professionals.”

He believes the presentations on forest tourism to be made at the IUFRO Congress, will help those professionals realize that “tourism to natural areas provides billions of dollars to the world’s economies. It also helps to expand support for forests and the conservation of forest ecosystems and wildlife. And, not unimportantly, it also can empower communities to conserve and use natural areas in ways they decide,” he said.

“Another benefit of tourism as a theme for the IUFRO meeting is that we can highlight the diversity of tourism thought throughout the world. Different cultures manage, plan, and think about tourism differently, and IUFRO gives us an opportunity to highlight this diversity.

“For example, several presentations will discuss community-based tourism in Mexico, which often manages its land communally, with the community deciding how tourism will integrate into land management,” Dr. Stein said. “This will contrast with community-based tourism research from the U.S. and Europe, which takes a more top-down approach to managing public resources.”

The session will highlight research that examines how land management agencies use innovative techniques to incorporate local community residents into tourism decision-making and also, presentations related to sustainable and ethical aspects associated with nature-based tourism and recreation.

The September 18-22 Congress in Freiburg will celebrate IUFRO’s 125th anniversary. Founded in 1892 in Eberswalde Germany, IUFRO has grown to unite more than 15,000 scientists (who cooperate in IUFRO on a voluntary basis) in almost 700 member organizations in more than 120 countries.

IUFRO promotes global cooperation in forest-related research and enhances the understanding of the ecological, economic and social aspects of forests and trees. It disseminates scientific knowledge to stakeholders and decision-makers and contributes to forest policy and on-the-ground forest management.

About 2000 scientists from 89 countries are expected to attend the Congress. The Nature-based Tourism session in Freiburg will be one of 172 scientific sessions that will cover a wide array of topics dealing with various aspects of forest research.

See you at the IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress in Freiburg, Germany!
Look out for [#IUFRO2017](#) on Twitter and [@iufro2017](#) on Facebook!

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is the only worldwide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees. Visit: <http://www.iufro.org/>

Find all issues of IUFRO Spotlight and more information about this series at: <http://www.iufro.org/media/iufro-spotlights/>

If you do not wish to receive IUFRO Spotlight publications, please email us at: [office\(at\)iufro.org](mailto:office(at)iufro.org)

Imprint: <http://www.iufro.org/legal/#c18944>